SOCIAL INTERACTIONAL ACCOUNTS OF ORAL COMMUNICATION IN THE ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: WHAT IS BEING LEARNED?

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Introduction

Teachers who manage oral communication classes in alternative languages (ALs) including but not restricted to English, for university students of intermediate proficiency or higher, need to engage with the theory and practice of second language acquisition (SLA) and attempt to align these two as closely as possible. For the *practice* of learning, what students actually do in class, should be understood, even if only implicitly, in terms of beliefs, concepts and *theories* of learning. While the world of research and theory may sometimes seem remote to teachers who have to deal with practical constraints and everyday contingencies, at the very least it is important to be able to interpret what is going on in classes, what is not going on, and what could or perhaps should be going on, referenced to some notions from SLA. In a recent article in the international journal Studies in Second Language Acquisition (Hulstijn et al., 2014), several leading scholars in the field consider the wide epistemological gap between on the one hand, linguistic-cognitive agendas, generally with quantitative approaches, often employing inferential statistics; on the other hand, qualitative research methods including ethnography and case studies, arising from sociocultural and socio-cognitive premises.

Earlier theories and accounts of SLA are largely cognitive in nature and are mainstream in post-graduate teacher training for ALs, and also applied linguistics courses. However, in recent years there has been some degree of paradigm shift with greater acceptance of social context-based accounts of instructed SLA, which may be less familiar or well understood. In particular, while cognitive studies in SLA usually

foreground the acquisition of language in a clear, mentalistic sense, studies on the sociocultural or socio-cognitive side are usually highly descriptive but it may be less clear to non-specialists what exactly is being acquired. The purpose of this paper is to summarize current understandings of social interactional accounts of instructed SLA – which I locate within sociocultural and socio-cognitive paradigms -- and then discuss the utility of these for teachers to interpret student activity and *learning* in these terms, in oral communication classes.

In the following sections I begin with a gloss of more traditional cognitive approaches to SLA and then consider in more detail, by way of contrast, social-interactional approaches, which form the main focus of the paper. I adopt a simple binary division into cognitive and social interactional approaches for the sake of clarity though this is rather contrived and does misrepresent the number, diversity and also degrees of difference between theories and approaches in the contemporary SLA literature. In this way, a paper of this length can only be a general and very partial account.

Epistemological Foundations

In the roughly 40 years of the existence of the field of SLA (Ortega, 2013) there have been tremendous advances in the range and scope of theory and this is hardly surprising since if scholars can model and interpret language in many different ways, then the same can apply to the acquisition of language. SLA theorizing has been informed principally by the disciplines of linguistics and psycholinguistics where language acquisition is usually understood to consist of intra-mental processes, based on computational metaphors of information processing. In these terms, human cognition – involving thought and learning -- is located in the individual mind/brain and, logically, research should investigate symbolic activity inside the individual mind; this is investigated most often in controlled, experimental conditions, usually generalizing from inferential statistics to arrive at robust, scientific findings.

The assumption that sense-making processes – cognition –

encompass only individuals has been termed a monological ontology (Linell, 2009) and logically, if there is a basic choice between structure and praxis, importance is afforded to structure and interactive exchanges are deemed to be epiphenomena (Suchman, 1987). Indeed, in monological terms, the social or human collective is understood to be merely the sum of individuals in it; the social does not exist as an entity per se (Linell, 2009: 44). The original roots of cognitivism, the doctrine that denotes a highly individualized concept of cognition, lie in Cartesian assumptions about the consciousness of the self as the essential center of existence, dating back to the seventeenth century. More recently, this worldview gained strength in the so-called 'cognitive revolution' of the 1950s in North America, arising from a variety of forces including a rejection of American behaviorism, significant advances in artificial intelligence (AI), rapid development of digital computing, and Chomsky's transformational approach to syntax in linguistics. A new, systematic study of SLA emerged with Corder's 1967 paper calling for exploration of second language learner errors in terms of learner-internal mechanisms, rather than (behaviorist) poor instruction and the dominant cognitivist framework of SLA was set (Atkinson, 2011).

Currently however, SLA is best characterized in terms of greater epistemological diversity following a social turn in the field, roughly dating to the mid 1990s. This was prompted by two factors (Ortega, 2013): on the one hand, there was a rejection by some scholars of cognitivist, positivistic research agendas and on the other, a growing body of research centered on non-causal and probabilistic perspectives driven by re-specifications of cognition in radically social ways. This trend away from the cognitive foundations of the discipline towards the social did not originate within the field of SLA, free from outside influence but rather, grew out of broader and more fundamental developments in the articulation of the epistemology of dialogism, the antithesis of monological understandings of human mind. According to Linell (1998), four intellectual traditions of the 20th Century in the human and social sciences have exerted strong influence on modern dialogism and these are: phenomenology, American pragmatism, social psychology, and socio-cultural semiotics. Dialogism focuses on interactional and

contextual features in human interaction and communicative actions are always other-oriented and mutually other-oriented. A useful concrete example of contrasting assumptions between monological and dialogical viewpoints comes from Bateson's (1980) discussion of 'aggression' in human behavior. From a monological perspective we might assume this to be an antisocial trait of an individual; from a dialogical point of view however, this is actually a function of a person's interactions with others and so is always co-constructed and can only be understood adequately in these terms.

Some scholars, for example Young and Astarita (2013: 171) use the term 'post-cognitive' when referring to dialogical accounts of SLA after the social turn but this can be misleading as what is really implied here is a *re-specification* of cognition – from monological to dialogical modeling – rather than the absence of cognitive considerations. Sociocultural theory originating in Vygotskian theory puts forward a robust model of the dialogical nature of human semiosis, stating that human consciousness arises from an interpenetration of two different entities. The first is (obviously) the human brain, a biological entity but the second (and perhaps less obvious) is human social activity and relationships, usually mediated through institutional experiences of language and discourse in families, schools and other social collectives. In this way, humans are radically social even on an individual level and consciousness is actually social activity reflected in the brain (Vygotsky, 1996). In contrast with the assumptions of cognitivism discussed earlier, structures and patterns in this view are epiphenomena while reality emerges out of specific events in joint activity, mediated by and through language. Without socialization with others in and through discursive practices, the individual is simply a biological entity with no human consciousness.

Interactional Competence

If the concept of consciousness lies at the heart of sociocultural theory, conversation analysis (CA) is the bedrock discipline of social interactional accounts of learning with its focus on face-to-face speech

interaction, the fundamental human semiotic activity par excellence, and the primary locus of social order in human collectivity. CA emerged from ethnomethodology, a sociological approach that opposed the macro-level, structural sociology of scholars such as Weber and Durkheim, and instead takes a micro approach by analyzing naturally occurring interaction in casual or institutional contexts, including classroom education. Empirical analysis of interactional episodes focuses on the mechanisms by which interactants produce and demonstrate understanding of conduct in interaction. Together, these practices make up an individual's *interactional competence* (Mehan, 1979), displayed in procedures of turn-taking, sequential design, and repair in talk with others. However, an individual's proficiency cannot be reduced to an intra-psychological property and can only be displayed, in a dialogical sense, in co-constructed interaction with others. Several scholars have captured this emergent, distributed and collaborative perspective on cognition in talk, including Schegloff's (1991) socially shared cognition, Saloman's (1993) distributed cognition, and Edwards and Potter's (1992) discursive psychology.

In connection with the term 'socially shared cognition', Schegloff (1991) discusses 'intersubjectivity' by which he means mutual attention to the maintenance of a world, including the development of the talk itself, understood by interactants to be a shared world. This is not necessarily an all-or-nothing concept; it can be achieved to varying degrees or analysis by researchers could even focus on failure by interactants to achieve it. This perspective leads very much away from monological understandings of cognition. While cognitive psychology abstracts subjects away from interactions, in a framework of socially shared or distributed cognition, the interaction *itself* becomes the site of studying cognition. From this, research analysts need to look at contexts of actual or situated cognition in real-life settings for while cognitive psychology assumes that knowledge can be acquired and transferred from one setting to another, situated perspectives are always embodied in social practice. In this way, monological and dialogical exemplars are incommensurable.

Developing the notion of shared cognition further, because dialogical accounts reject a primary focus on intra-mental information

processing, the mechanisms by which cognition, in this case co-terminous with intersubjectivity, must be re-specified. Dialogical accounts of speech interaction model language as a shared resource for making meaning; this resource is in fact a semiotic map with meaning potential. Meaning resides in the sign (language) and signification and hence meaning take place when interactants signify with each other in interaction (Ferdinand de Saussure, 1978). In this way, cognition is mediated via the linguistic sign and contra the assumptions of cognitive science, 'information' here should be understood as meaning rather than knowledge (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2000). According to this view, language is a semiotic system rather than a system of the human mind and the activity of signs is best understood as taking place within the world, between minds rather than in minds.

In the terms described so far, a CA framework to learning in institutional AL settings re-casts the learning of oral communication as *participation* and joint activity by learners in routines and practices of classroom dialogue or multilogue. Of course, CA is an approach that originally was not developed in or specifically for language learning or even educational contexts. After working with AL data of oral interactions of non-native speakers of English in Europe using a CA based approach, Firth and Wagner (1997) wrote a controversial article in the Modern Language Journal that advocated the inclusion of CA concepts within mainstream SLA. CA-for-SLA or CA-SLA as it became known grew out of the resulting debate (with many dissenting voices among mainstream psycholinguistics) about whether or not research in the CA tradition is compatible with the field of SLA. There is certainly one point where CA is different to mainstream SLA with its deficit view of the non-native learner since the focus of analysis in CA is on the 'doing' of language as a social accomplishment (Ortega, 2011). AL learners are still 'doing' language in a socio-pragmatic sense even where their utterances are not native level in phonology or lexico-grammar. In CA-SLA researchers approach data of interaction and attend only to phenomena that are co-oriented to by participants themselves, deriving from the ethnomethodological origins of the approach. And herein lies something of a conundrum that continues to shadow CA-SLA: since analysts cannot

assume any pre-determined constructs of 'learning', it can be problematic to claim that research findings advance greater understanding of learning in SLA terms.

An Ecological Semiotic Approach to Language Education

Perhaps the single most comprehensive body of work (published in English) contributing to current theorizing and advances in the understanding of social interactional aspects of institutional AL learning is that by the educational linguist, Leo van Lier (see especially, 1988, 1996, 2004). Fundamental to van Lier's perspective is that *educational* linguistics, as opposed to linguistics as such, must be approached as an interdisciplinary field and thus draws on insights from diverse fields including linguistics, education, sociology, anthropology, and language philosophy. Van Lier's purpose has been to develop grounded theory from observation of real settings, to improve educational practice. His approach is usually that of an ethnographer and while he tends to frame his research in a macro setting of sociocultural theory, his main interest is the micro level of language classrooms, focusing on speech exchange systems in classrooms and specific data of speech interaction to make useful statements about the practice of AL education, for teachers and learners. This can, in some cases, generate hypotheses for focused research about interaction in AL classrooms.

The interdisciplinarity of this approach does not sit well with post-positivistic assumptions about research constructs from psycholinguistics and cognitively–oriented SLA, which mostly deal with more closed systems of enquiry. However, if we assume a dialogical stance towards human communication, van Lier's formation of related concepts does amount to a theory in Layder's (1996: 15) sense where "…theories should be regarded as 'networks' or 'integrated clusterings' of concepts, propositions and 'world views'". Layder (1996) goes on to contrast this claim with post-positivistic approaches, typical of research in the natural sciences, where the way that two or more variables relate to each other is explored. However, van Lier's 'ecological' linguistics (2004) explicitly

sees classrooms of learners as complex social sites and the metaphor of ecology that he uses is intended to represent the relationships between constructs that describe what occurs in these communities of practice in ethnographic terms. In this way, van Lier's work is committed to a theory of practice, based on observation, that acknowledges diversity of practices and the difficulties of assuming transfer of findings from laboratory experiments to classrooms, and even from one classroom to another. Perhaps most controversially from a cognitivist perspective, van Lier assumes from the start that participation and initiative develop learners' interactional competence and does not attempt to prove (for example, using longitudinal data of case studies) that this is so. According to Byrnes (2013), this is consistent with other more recent areas in applied linguistics, such as a dyanamic systems approach, emergentism, and chaos complexity theory, even though critics of the approach may find this inadequate from the point of view of establishing comprehensive theory. However, van Lier's objective has been concerned with establishing a grounded theory of practice, from observing and interpreting practice (van Lier, 1998, 1996, 2004). Put in its simplest terms, learning oral communication in an AL is best facilitated by teachers when they provide access to and promote participation and engagement by learners in meaningful interactional activities (Byrnes, 2013).

Agency and Initiative

In order to interpret classroom AL oral communicative practices in social interactional terms we must first have a model of what it is we wish to describe. Van Lier uses a variety of related constructs to achieve this and, as discussed earlier, this does not amount to an arbitrary collection of ideas but is consistent with his broad approach of understanding classroom processes in an ecological sense (van Lier, 2004). The concept of agency is centrally important here. This involves activity and initiative on behalf of the learner and more than inputs from teachers and textbooks, is crucial to learning (van Lier, 2008). However, 'agency' can also mean more than this; through agency, subjects assign relevance

and significance to objects in their perceptual field (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006) and according to Wertsch, Tulviste and Hagstrom (1993), Western specifications of agency usually assume that this is a trait of the individual (monological) but from a sociocultural (dialogical) point of view, it is actually inter-mental (cited in van Lier, 2008: 163). An example of this is that in the course of talk, if an unsolicited move to take the floor is made by an interlocutor, it is socially interpreted by other interactants who will either accept the move or block it by ignoring the speaker or talking over the top of him or her (van Lier, 2008). In this way, agency is a distributed and co-constructed phenomenon.

The more practical notion of initiative is very important. Essentially, social interactional accounts of classroom talk see 'learning' in terms of prominence of student initiative in the co-construction of talk – put simply, in active, signifying roles rather than mostly responding to teachers. These can be empirically located in the architecture of interaction through conversation analysis (CA) allowing us to record agentive expressions (van Lier, 2013: 243) such as turn-taking, turn allocation, sequencing management, agreement, etc. These may be teacher-student, student-student as in pair or group work, perhaps a mix of both and a qualitative and sometimes also quantitative analysis of these can give a clear outline of the kinds of activity types operating in classrooms. We would not normally expect to find only one activity type or participation structure at work in a particular class – though we might – but rather several operating at one time. For example, teachers may need to give administrative announcements, check for comprehension of instructions, and direct students into pair or group activities in a managerial capacity. Where students are working in pairs or groups we would expect a transcript of the interaction to show students themselves initiating and changing topic, indicating agreement and disagreement, similar to the more 'naturalistic' discourse usually found outside classrooms.

Acquiring Interactive Practices

When interactants develop the context of talk over episodes of contributions, they are doing much more than taking turns; they are co-constructing a shared reality or 'lifeworld' through symbolic means. In this way the intersubjectivity of this shared and developing context of talk exists in a deeper sense than just a contingent setting up of expectations of a prospective turn from a previous one; and from the perspective of the second turn, a context is indicated (though it can be suspended or ignored) from the previous turn. For many AL learners who have experience of spoken interaction with others in classrooms, utterances and episodes are framed within memories that provide a context for the acquisition of language and these are inexorably linked with other people. Here Bakhtin's sense of the dialogical nature of the word (1981) is important: not only do we incorporate the words of others into our own (a 'heteroglossic' sense), meaning that we are never truly original when we signify with others, but on a deeper level of social experience the other can never be wholly extricated from ourselves. Classroom experiences of interacting with others are not just significant for what is learned in the short term; the proactive identity of the learner is also in the frame. According to the precepts of activity theory, the present encounter with others has a history that starts long before, with others (Linell, 1998: 47). Bourdieu's (1997) concept of habitus is especially helpful in understanding how experience of practices in the social collective affect the individual. Bourdieu attempted to reconcile the gap between social structure (as manifested in body language, activity or discourse) and the mental structure of the individual – or in more academic terms, between structuralism and phenomenology in sociology. Habitus is the bridge between the two whereby the individual acquires a set of dispositions as a direct result of embodied experience in repetitive structures of social action; our personal histories predispose us to behave in certain ways. In recent years Young (2009) and Young and Astarita (2013) have expanded on Bourdieu's ideas to include the work of other scholars in a framework of practice or action in human semiosis that they term Practice Theory, in particular for discursive practice and language learning. A significant

finding for the purpose of this paper is that Young and Astarita claim to have demonstrated, by using introspective accounts by AL learners, "…a dialectic between the immediate experiences of language learners and the durable and transposable dispositions emanating from and integrating their past experiences." (2013: 171). Bourdieu's (1977) point is reinforced: the consciousness of the individual concerning appropriate or familiar structures of social action is formed through contextualized experiences. Logically it follows that change in social practices, including experiences of language education, should bring about a change of consciousness.

Negotiating a Theme for a Joint Presentation

According to van Lier (2008: 177) project-based activities (Beckett and Miller, 2006) are a particularly good vehicle for 'perceptual learning' where students can select their own course of agentive action (what to speak about and in what terms) and select from a range of possible 'affordances' (in this case, options) in their semiotic field. In the following transcript, three Japanese post graduate students who are not English majors, are working together in a small group in an 'academic communication' class, designed to provide opportunities to learners for extended interaction in English with others, relating to academic themes. They have been set the task of negotiating together a specific topic which they will research and later present to their class and a tentative plan should be completed by the end of the class period (they have about seventy minutes to complete the activity). The stipulations are that this must be within the very general category of environmental ecology and they must each speak about some aspect of their topic in a later joint presentation with slides. They are supposed to submit a detailed account of what each individual intends to contribute, before the end of the class period. The three students are seated with chairs looking inward in a rough circle and they are one of four other similar groups in the room who are engaged in the same activity. The teacher is circulating to check that the students are talking together in English and she is also available

in a managerial capacity if anyone needs help or is unsure how to proceed. The total transcript is very long, lasting about seventy minutes so the excerpt below is only intended to exemplify some general points.

M1, M2 (males 1 & 2) and F1 (female 1) have been speaking together for about ten minutes already. They have been discussing what their broad topic should be but have not successfully arrived at any negotiated conclusion yet. M2 earlier proposed that they talk about endangered animals in the remote Ogasawara Islands in the south of Japan but this did not meet with enthusiasm from the other two. F1 proposed a discussion of energy costs for consumers in Japan (feeling that these are too high) – electricity in particular. M1 did not warm to either of these proposals and instead wished to present about (what he feels is) irresponsible governance after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, concerning nuclear waste disposal. M2 has gently chastised his partners by pointing out that they only have ten minutes to speak so they quickly need to decide on a very specific topic so that they can analyze this down into discrete sections within which each member has a clear role within the group. In 01 M1 concedes that M2 is correct – they need to quickly reach agreement on a specific theme -- while F1 demonstrates affiliation and engagement with overlapping laughter in 02. In 03, 05, and 07 M1 attempts to suggest a way out of the deadlock but in 08 M2 for the first time makes a large concession and agrees to drop his preferred option (animal conservation) for something connected with energy problems, as favored by the other two. M1 seems impressed and surprised at M2's magnanimous compromise (09) while F1 demonstrates affiliation and continued attention in 11. It is still unclear what they are actually going to do and so in 13 M2 moves to resolve this. M1 interjects in 14, trying to include M2's original idea with F1 displaying affiliation and engagement in 15 but not making any contribution to the talk. M2 indicates in 16 and 18 that he understands M1's point but in 20 he makes it clear that they need one simple topic. He seems to indicate in 22 and 24 that they need perhaps to start again to find something satisfactory while in 25 M1 accepts this. They now have to start afresh.

01 M1 [good naturedly accepting M2's point] aah.. I can understand y-
your =sentence=
02 F1 [signaling engagement] =[laughter]=
03 M1 your statement/ yes/ but.. YOU, .. err the topic you want to-
04 M2 [attention] hmm/
05 M1 ==research is/ ..ogasawara animals/-
06 M2 ==hmm hmm/ but =you know=
07 M1 [bids for floor but fails] =but=
08 M2 == two of us are interested in like, energy problems/ so I think..
yah/ it better to make a presentation about/ the energy//
09 M1 [laughs gratefully at M2's concession] oh really?
10 M2 hm//
11 F1 [signaling affiliation] [laughs]
12 M1 oh really// ..so
<2 secs>
13 M2 I'm interested in both your topics/ so…
14 M1 hmm/ ..how can we connect.. the animal/ err.. between the
animal and.. [laughs, demonstrating affiliation] power//
15 F2 [demonstrating engagement] [laughs]
16 M2 Ah/ yah/ like.. infl- INFLUENCE of like..
17 M1 [engagement] uh huh//
18 M2 ==ra- radiation/ to-
19 M1 ah hah//
20 M2 ==animals/ but.. but I think we can focus on/ ..one topic/
21 M1 =hm hm//
22 M2 = we can change..
23 M1 hmm/ hmm//
24 M2 ==you know, like/ our topics/ so…
25 M1 [mutters to self, partly inaudible] (XXXX) ..naru hodo/ [Japanese:
I see] soo/
<2.5 secs>

Several points stand out from a cursory look at the transcript above. The learners are negotiating the content of their own syllabus – what they are going to do – themselves, rather than being directed by a teacher.

There is no teacher voice asserting direct control over interaction between the three learners by indicating who can talk and when they should stop and then allocating the floor to the next speaker; such speech functions are managed by the interactants themselves, displaying agency and initiative in interaction as discussed earlier. Along with pauses and hesitations this continues for about seventy minutes until the issue of exactly what the students will present, is resolved. This is qualitatively different from a more 'pedagogical' discourse usually associated with AL classrooms where class time will often consist of elements of pair or group work but the teacher's voice is dominant in a directive capacity. There is clearly asymmetry in this particular episode as F1 makes no explicit utterances at all (though she does contribute much more earlier and later) but she is actually demonstrating affiliation and attention through laughter (not unusual with younger Japanese women in social situations). In this way, the episode as a whole displays complementary rather than symmetrical participation roles which is usual in transcripts of authentic communication. In terms of earlier discussion of intersubjectivity and distributed cognition, the interactants are displaying coordination through cooperative principles, along with mutuality and reciprocity – the latter to *some* degree; for when we observe naturally occurring interaction empirically, we will never find these qualities entirely present (Linell, 1998).

After the project was finished and the students had completed their presentation, they were asked to reflect on what was valuable or significant for them from the experience of collaboratively negotiating the content of the presentation and also the precise role of each group member in this. In fact, the entire exercise took two class periods of approximately seventy minutes of uninterrupted time together. All were adamant that the negotiation had been very useful but also extremely intense – they had never spoken at such length in English before but perhaps more importantly, the need to arrive at a mutually acceptable plan drove the talk forward but was also very tiring. No one mentioned their performance or learning in terms of vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation but all commented on the difficulty of arriving at some kind of consensus with people that they did not know beforehand, since

their major subjects were in different departments at the university. The fact that this was accomplished, through the medium of English was a new experience for them and this was what was most important.

All spoke of the challenge of working through disagreements, non-aligned ideas and conflicting agendas (not necessarily in these words) with others, and a look at the complete transcript which went for around seventy minutes, shows multiple switches in alignment and degrees of control (footing) throughout the length of the extended interaction. It was the *change* in participatory practices and signifying opportunities and indeed requirements of the activity in the AL that were important. None had lived in an English-speaking society or stayed in one for any significant amount of time, so they had not been exposed to language practice of this more 'naturalistic' and less institutionalized – i.e. other controlled – quality before. Framing this in the terms of Bourdieu (1977), Young (2009) and Young and Astarita (2013) above, the experience contrasted and jarred with their habitualized experiences of interaction in AL classrooms. It would be too much to claim that one or two experiences like this have revolutionary effects for the learner but on a sustained basis, such can construct psychological templates of action that can be drawn upon in future AL encounters.

Conclusion

The paper began by highlighting the structural opposition between monological and dialogical paradigms of mind, which is the fundamental and perhaps incommensurable difference between cognitivist and social-interactional approaches to SLA. More specifically, the point of departure between these two broad approaches is a different notion of cognition from an intra-mental, information processing capacity on the one hand, and an inter-mental, socially distributed attention, on the other.

If we approach settings of language acquisition as ethnographers we can not help but model the research context as a complex social site which is very different to the assumptions of post-positivism where the relationships between a limited number of clearly defined and limited

variables are investigated, generally through inferential statistics. Van Lier's ecological metaphor is very effective in putting forward a scheme of related concepts which capture the social dynamic of speech-as-action in communities of practice; for if we are to discuss social interaction in AL classrooms, we must have a clear model of exactly what we are talking about. Van Lier's interdisciplinary scheme enables the researcher-as-ethnographer to gain a rich description of the dynamics of AL classrooms and from this, criterion-linked observations can lead to interpretation and in some cases, the generation of hypotheses.

Finally, if social interactional accounts do not focus on the acquisition of grammar, lexis, phonology, or improved speech performance in the AL, what can they be said to focus on? The simple answer is the acquisition of interaction itself, understood as a biography of experiences of interactional genres and situations leading to a dispositional change in the pedagogic subject towards future interactions. The implications for educational practice in societies where the AL has little currency in daily life outside of the college gates are that extended speech situations aimed at some kind of consensus or 'closed task' features, unrestricted by strong modes of teacher surveillance, are helpful or essential for higher or intermediate level students, especially those majoring in English, to gain interactional competence as well as linguistic competence. This can be difficult to engineer in AL departments in monolingual societies but it is an important consideration.

Transcription Scheme

(adapted from Gumperz, 1992)

Symbol	Significance
//	Final fall
/	Slight fall indicating "more is to come"
?	Final rise
,	Slight rise as in listing intonation
-	Truncation (e.g. what ti- time is it/)

..	Pauses of less than 0.5 seconds
…	Pauses greater than 0.5 seconds (unless precisely timed)
<2>	Precise units of time (2 seconds pause)
=	indictates overlap and latching of speaker's utterances,

e.g.

R: so you understand =the requirements=
B: =yeah, I under=Stand them/
R: so you understand the requirements?
B: ==yeah, I understand them/
R: ==and the schedule?
B: yeah/

With spacing and single "=" before and after the appropriate portions of the text indicating overlap, and turn-initial double "=" indicating latching of the utterance to the preceding one.

[ ]	Nonlexical phenomena, such as laughter, and author's interpretive comments
( )	Unintelligible speech
di(d)	A good guess at an unclear segment
(did)	A good guess at an unclear word.

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